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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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February 22, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Cyrus Vance *CV*

1. The Horn - Ambassador Addou of Somalia called on me this afternoon with a "critical" message from Siad Barre. He said that a majority of Somali military officers had called upon Siad Barre to open a dialogue with the Soviet Union in view of the military situation. Siad Barre had refused and said this would never happen while he was President.

Addou made two requests: One, that the United States authorize third country transfer of U. S. arms urgently to Somalia. Second, that President Siad Barre be invited to the U. S. in order to show he had some moral support. I asked if Siad Barre was prepared to withdraw his troops into Somalia or to state that he was going to do so in conjunction with requesting arms. Addou replied indirectly that the arms request was without reference to a Somali withdrawal.

Addou said a senior Minister and the Somali Ambassador to the U. S. had been dispatched to Lagos to request that Obasanjo urge Bongo to call an emergency OAU meeting. He was unclear as to whether this delegation was authorized to enter into talks with an Ethiopian delegation also expected in Lagos.

2. Ethiopian Intentions Toward the Somali Frontier - Mengistu has conveyed to you his assurances that Ethiopia does not intend to cross the Somali frontier. Such assurances would appear to be fairly strong; however, there have been several recent [REDACTED] which refer to joint Ethiopian-Soviet planning of military operations that would involve incursions into Somali territory, including the occupation of areas of northern Somalia. One such report in particular, [REDACTED] has informed us that if the Somalis do not withdraw from all Ethiopian territory

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NSC Declassification Review [EO 13526]

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by John Powers on 2/16/2018

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the Ethiopians are prepared to move into Somali territory, with Soviet concurrence.

There are several possible explanations for such reports of Ethiopian planning for a frontier crossing. They could be, but are not necessarily, in conflict with Mengistu's assurances, for various reasons. Moreover, the phraseology "with Soviet concurrence" may not necessarily mean that the Soviets have already given their agreement to an Ethiopian move into Somalia, but rather "provided that the Soviets gave their concurrence".

At this time, our judgment is that Mengistu would prefer not to cross the Somali border if he could achieve the withdrawal of the Somalis from Ethiopian territory by some other means. Nevertheless, Mengistu's decision will probably depend on whether or not he believes such a move would be necessary to get Somali forces out of all of the Ogaden. If there appeared to be no other way to achieve this objective, we believe that he probably would be prepared to cross the border.

3. ERW - It was most helpful for you to alert the Danish Prime Minister yesterday to your thinking on ERW, linking production, deployment and an offer to the Soviets on the SS-20. The Danes are the more moderate of the two Scandinavian NATO Allies, and your alert will give them time to prepare for the NATO Council consultation on Friday.

In response to a suggestion from German Foreign Minister Genscher, I have also passed our general views to the Belgians and the Dutch. With this advance word from us, they may be helpful as we work this out in NATO over the coming weeks.

4. Nuclear Cooperation Agreement with Egypt - During discussions between Joseph Nye and Egyptian Minister Shaker, the Egyptians expressed keen interest in completing a nuclear cooperation agreement, which was initialed in 1976 and is pending. Now that the non-proliferation legislation has passed both Houses the Egyptians have requested us to tell them what additional provisions would need to be included in

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the agreement and have said they would like to move forward quickly. We have said that the main provision concerns full-scope safeguards, but that some technical changes might be required. They have indicated that they will seek a commitment from us not to agree to more lenient provisions for the Israelis than we agree to with them. Concerning timing, we suggested that it would not be opportune to send forward the US-Egyptian nuclear cooperation agreement while Congress is considering arms transfers to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

I agree

5. Argentine Human Rights Movement - The Argentine human rights situation remains serious but the Videla Government has continued the series of modest improvements begun with the release of 389 political prisoners at Christmas time. On February 20, the Argentines published a list of 432 prisoners held under executive detention. This list, the third this month, brings to some 1,900 the number of political prisoners identified by the government. (The government previously acknowledged that it holds at least 3,600 political prisoners; we believe the figure is higher.) We expect more lists soon. The lists are important because once the government acknowledges that it holds an individual, the likelihood of physical harm is diminished. In another move, the Minister of Interior told our Ambassador that several prisoners about whom the United States has expressed high-level interest may soon be released.

Good

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